

What is Centre Time?



* What exactly do we do during centre time, and more importantly, why do we do it?

* During Centre Time, students are allowed to move around our classroom and participate in a variety of activities. In my opinion, this is one of the most important times of the day for a kindergarten child. Play is children's work, but Centre Time play includes all subject areas.

* Though it is play, it is a structured time because I consider it an extension of learning. Here is a description of what goes on during Centre Time. As a teacher, it is great to watch the children interact and make choices, and to watch them discover new learnings on their own, without the direction of the teacher. It also gives teachers time to work with individual students and listen to them read or work on important skills.



Organization

1. Centre Board - Use two plastic pocket charts, each of which has 12 clear pockets. Make pictures for each centre on your computer. At any one time, have 24 centres up and running. The centre selection can be changed easily, just by slipping in a new picture in the pocket. Under each picture, Velcro circles are attached. The circles represent how many children can be at that centre at one time. For example, you can see two blue circles for the easel, but four blue circles for the kitchen. A picture of a Centre Board can be found below.

2. Centre Names: I use plastic chips such as poker chips for centre names. Using a permanent marker, write each child's name on a chip. Then, put a Velcro circle on the back of each chip. One of your helpers for the day is given the job of "centre names." This helper picks up a chip, one at a time, and calls that child to receive their name. This is great practice for learning to read each other's names. After receiving their name chip, children then go to the centre-board and pick their centre. Only two children at a time are allowed to be at the centre-board at a time. The rest of the children take turns waiting in line behind the stop sign. Make the stop sign out of a red plastic placemat. Cut it into the correct shape, then used a marker

to write the word stop. Because this stop sign just sits on the floor at the beginning of the line, it has to be pretty durable because the children will be walking over it. Children are eager to pick their centres, so they don't spend much time waiting in line.

3. Children are usually allowed to remain in the centre for as long as they like. However, if a centre is new or extremely popular, you may set a timer so everyone can take a turn! Before leaving a centre to pick a new activity, children make the centre tidy and put away the materials so it will be ready for the next group.



4. When your Centre Time is over, the teacher or aide blinks the classroom lights twice to signal the children. Then, the flurry of cleanup-time begins and children look like little bees scurrying around, cleaning up the centres. The children are very responsible for cleaning up, because they love this special time of day.

Diana is standing in front of the centre board. At the centre board kids pick their own centre and develop **decision skills**



Block Centre: Here future architects and builders work on the skills of measurement and balance, counting and sorting, and gross and fine motor development.

Table Centres: The activities at these centres change daily. Activities focus on fine motor development and may include pegboards, lacing beads, geo-boards, puzzles, dominoes, etc.



Light Table: Children are fascinated by colour and light, and light table lets them observe, experiment and ...hands on! Using crystal climbers students build in all directions while working on skills of patterning, balance and classification.



Water Table: Children can pour water down a rippling waterfall or float boats around bends and turns! At this centre children are developing measurement skills and mathematical skills as well as predictions, fine motor control, and scientific inquiry.



Art Table: Special projects such as Easter eggs, Seasons, Christmas ornaments and such are reserved for the art table. As we develop creativity, we are also developing cutting, colouring, and drawing skills.



Table Two: A variety of materials such as special papers, markers, stencils and pictures encourage writing, creativity and publishing. Sandra is stamping with alphabet stamps

Science Table: Materials here may include hands on activities to learn about insects, animals, magnets, weather, etc. Today the children are exploring our Discovery Bottles. To learn more about how to make your own bottles, click the picture.

Flannel Board: Students can manipulate pictures, alphabet letters numbers or shapes or use story pieces to retell familiar tales. Here Mimi is dressing community helpers in a variety of costumes.

Train Table: Students can create their own trains and cities while developing spatial relationships, directionality and creativity skills.

Magnet Board: One the right you see our white magnetic board. Shapes, letters, or numbers are placed in a box on the bottom.



Easel: We like to provide a variety of art experiences here. Painting, chalk drawings, sponge prints, are some of the ways we use this kindergarten favourite. You're not seeing double! There is a mirror on the wall next to our easel. It provides an experience with symmetry.

Workbench: It's great fun to role-play being a carpenter! We also add measuring tapes, and pencils that children use to "draft" their creations. While Jose and Guille are working on their projects they are developing fine motor and problem solving skills, they also get a chance to develop their creativity!

Sand Table: At this table the girls are using tools to write letters or words or create pictures. Carolina's mom seems to be having a good time!
Carolina is a flurry of activity during which an incredible amount of learning takes place!
(To be continued)